



by Sean Coleman  
associate news editor

"The capital's most exclusive radio station!"

The old motto for WVCW, Virginia Commonwealth University's student-run radio station, may be true [the station can only be heard in a few places on campus], but the station is trying its best to be noticed.

Max Ryder, WVCW's general manager and weekend overnight disc jockey at XL102, said, from the time he first joined the station in 1988, he has seen a great improvement.

"When I first came to WVCW, the place was trashy," he said. "There were cobwebs all over, DJs (disc jockeys) played whatever they wanted and

nobody seemed to care. All that has changed now."

Right now, the station is heard in the three dormitories, the Student Commons and the Hibbs Building. Ryder said the station was planning a "media blitz" to promote the fact that the station is finally available in Rhoads and Johnson halls and Gladding Residence Center, once the transmission is fine-tuned.

"We have to let people know they are able to listen to us," he said. "Last semester, we were not in the dorms and some students tried to listen to us and all they heard was static."

WVCW can be heard in the dormitories on 640 AM.

The station receives almost all of its money from the Student Media Commission. Its budget last year was \$10,000. Its budget for the spring semester is \$15,000.

With the money, Ryder is upgrading the station's equipment. In a few weeks, two professional, state of the art compact disc players will be installed. By that time, 80 percent of music played will be from compact discs.

Ryder said the station's new catch phrase, "the #1 college music station," is true.

"Our station, soundwise and in every other aspect, is definitely one of the best I have heard," he said. "Our DJs are excellent, you will rarely ever hear any dead air on WVCW."

Ryder said this was due to a "professional attitude" shared among the station's employees.

"At the station, we have more of an employer to employee type of relationship," he said. "I've been in the radio

business for 5 years and I try to run WVCW like a real station. I am the manager of a real radio station.

"People have to realize that this is a training ground, a place where you are exposed to the field of radio. Now is the time to learn the truth about the real radio world."

The format at WVCW is mainstream alternative. Ryder called the station "rated G and very accessible to everyone."

"After 1988, we softened up the format a bit," he said. "We can't really survive without our audience, so we can't afford to offend them."

"Up until about (7 p.m.), we are very structured, but after that, we are a bit more free form, obviously because there are fewer listeners."

There are specialty shows aired, such as blues and jazz hours and a syndicated Top 40 countdown show.

About 10 percent of WVCW's programming is syndicated.

Ryder said he had high hopes for other programming such as sports and news.

"Our sports coverage is great," he said. "We do the play-by-play for women's basketball and we receive men's basketball from VCU's Sports Information Bureau. Right now, we are talking about covering VCU baseball live."

Robert Fleskus, WVCW's news director, said the station's news department, although small, was beginning to come into its own.

"We are taking things step by step," he said. "We would love to cover issues concerning VCU, but right now, with a staff of four people, we can barely cover

the morning and afternoon news updates."

The newspaper and radio are the major source of news for the hourly updates, but Fleskus said, when there are major events on campus, WVCW will be there.

"When the budget walkout happened last semester, we got a few soundbites. Next year will be the year when we really begin to cover events happening at VCU."

One of the problems with being a radio station with an extremely limited audience is selling advertisements. Javier Hernandez, the advertising director, said most of the ads the station runs are trades or promotion.

"When the circus came to town, we traded 38 spots for 25 passes," he said. "We advertise the Psych-a-Deli, because we hold WVCW night there. Everything is a trade."

Hernandez said he has a hard time selling ads, because of WVCW's limited range.

"When I first talk to people, their first reaction is 'WVC—who?'," he said. "These businesses think they would be wasting their money on us. We have to break that stigma."

Both Ryder and Fleskus said they were optimistic about the future of WVCW.

"WVCW has been around for 22 years and it has had its ups and downs," Ryder said. "Right now, we are on the upswing and we are only going to get better."

"We are there for VCU students and more are noticing us," Fleskus said. "Give us time and we will turn even more heads,"